EN2 - Stonequarry Creek Environmental Management Strategy and interpretive signage at the Argyle St Bridge, Picton and the Viaduct

EN2 Stonequarry Creek Environmental Management Strategy and Interpretive Signage at the Argyle St Bridge, Picton and the Viaduct

606 TRIM 1040

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The purpose of this report is to respond to two Council resolutions regarding environmental enhancements along Stonequarry Creek in Picton
- It is also to provide Council with the opportunity to adopt the Review of the Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan (RSCVMP) The revised SCVMP considers native vegetation, weeds, revegetation opportunities and interpretive signage as well as identifying opportunities and constraints to enhancing the environmental aspects of Stonequarry Creek around the Argyle Street Bridge, the Picton CBD and the Viaduct.

This report recommends:

- That the Revised Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan be adopted by Council
- That Council investigate opportunities for external resources and partnerships to undertake the recommendations of the Revised Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan
- That Council consult with Crown Lands to gain access rights for any future works within the creek area.

REPORT

On 15 August 2014 Notice of Motion 280/2014 resolved:

"That Council develop a strategy to enhance the environmental aspects of the stretch of Stonequarry creek around the Argyle Street Bridge and Picton CBD and continue to identify and source resources to implement this strategy."

On 12 June 2014 a Notice of Motion 204/2014 resolved:

"That a report come to Council regarding strategies which includes signage, promotional material and funding opportunities, to improve the appearance and environment of the area around the viaduct in Picton."

This report aims to provide Council with information concerning the reviewed plan and to address the above resolutions.



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BACKGROUND

Original SCVMP

In 1996 Council commissioned the development of the original Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan (SCVMP) as part of the Stonequarry Creek Floodplain Management Strategy. The SCVMP covers the area of Stonequarry Creek from the junction of Racecourse Creek downstream to the Viaduct at Victoria Oval.

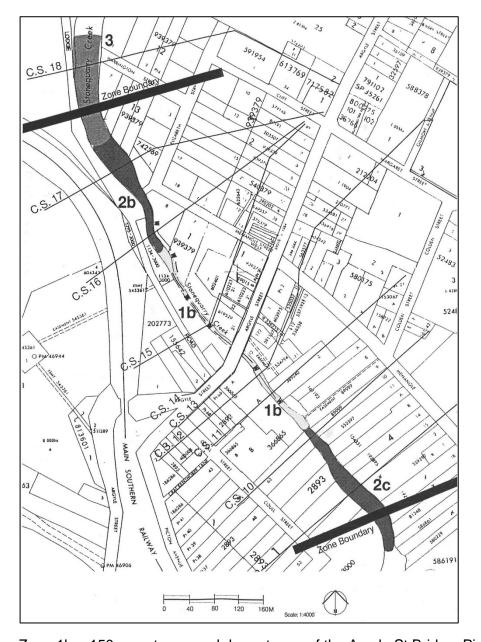
The objectives of the original SCVMP were to create a valuable corridor of vegetation that improves biodiversity, habitat and other environmental attributes whilst mitigating floods in the area. The preferred flood mitigation option adopted by Council from the Floodplain Management Strategy was "Stream Clearing."

A priority risk area identified in the plan is within 150m upstream and downstream of the Argyle St Bridge, Area 1b (see map below). Works have been focused on this area since the commencement of the program in 2001, i.e. woody weed control, debris removal and bank stabilisation.

The SCVMP provides specific guidelines on revegetation activities within this area stipulating that revegetation is to be sparse with a focus on sedges and rushes and the occasional small shrub. Trees can only be planted outside of the channel at a vertical height of 8m above the creek line.



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Zone 1b, ~150m upstream and downstream of the Argyle St Bridge, Picton

The objectives of the original SCVMP must specifically be implemented in a manner which:

- Does not impede water flow or increase flood risk during high flow events
- Control exotic and weed species
- Enhance native species and resilience
- Consider and implement measures that reduce both nutrient loading and water pollution of the creek system



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- Provide information and educational aspects of the site
- Develop an ongoing management strategy
- Continue to seek and source external funding and partnerships to implement the strategy.

SCVMP activities undertaken to date

Date	Activity	Budget
2001	Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan commenced with employment of a project coordinator, engagement of contractors to undertake weed control and bank stabilisation and a number of community education activities and events. Interpretive signage was installed at various locations along Stonequarry Creek including the Argyle St Bridge and the Viaduct.	\$189,000
Jan 2002 til the present	Green Corps / Green Army team engaged to undertake works on Stonequarry Creek identified in the plan.	
2002	Continued community education and engagement, contractors engaged to continue weed control and bank stabilisation program.	\$135,000
Dec 2003 - Dec 2004	Privet control program from HNCMA grant	\$82,000
Apr-06	Willow Control project	\$6,000
July 2006 til the present	Contractors engaged annually to undertake ongoing maintenance, woody weed control and bank stabilisation	\$12,000 per annum
December 2015	Review and update the Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan	\$1,000

Other work activities that have occurred on other parts of Stonequarry Creek

- Stonequarry Creek Landcare (Viaduct)
- Kooris on the Move / Bushtucker Garden. Corporate Tree planting day, Council Staff Planting National Tree Day 2014
- Viaduct funding, HNCMA \$7,000, 2010/2011
- Racecourse Creek Funding, HNCMA \$7,000, 2013
- Picton Sports ground plantings, Interfaceflor Corporate day, National Tree day 2013
- Green Army has worked at various sites along Stonequarry Creek
 2014 / 2015 including the Argyle St Bridge area and the Viaduct.



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The Revised SCVMP

In 2015 Council engaged Proust Bushland Services to undertake a review of the SCVMP in regard to the current state of the vegetation along the riparian zone from Racecourse Creek to the viaduct using 3 zones:

- Zone 1: Between Racecourse creek and Elizabeth Street
- Zone 2: Between Elizabeth Street and Coull Street
- Zone 3: Between Coull Street and the Viaduct.

The review area was located in the riparian zone (average bank width of 20M) along a 2.4 km section of the creek.

The following data was collected as part of the review:

- Native vegetation (canopy, understory and ground layer), their densities, numbers, health and locations
- All woody weeds, exotic climbers and noxious weeds, their densities, numbers, locations and recommended treatments
- Potential revegetation areas and implementation strategy
- Identify sites for interpretive signage.

The revised plan continues to keep the principles of maintaining a cleared stream area while also enhancing the environmental aspects of the riparian zone. The revised plan highlights the changes in the riparian zone vegetation since 2001 and also considers updating existing interpretive signage and identifies further revegetation opportunities.

It contains the following recommendations (in summary):

- Prioritize zones and keystone weed species.
- Implement a weed control and minimisation program
- Develop a revegetation program
- Develop or replace interpretive signage regarding environmental and heritage values of the Creek.

CONSULTATION

Consultation has occurred with Proust Bushland Services and Council Officers from both the Environmental Services and Infrastructure Planning Sections.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Council engaged Proust Bushland Services to review and update the Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan. Funds were made available to undertake this activity from the Stormwater Levy Fund.



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Ongoing funds are available from the flood mitigation fund i.e. \$12,000 per year to implement the recommendations of the SCVMP.

Any other activities such as landscaping / beautification works, interpretive signage upgrades around Argyle St Bridge and the Viaduct will require extra funding.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Review of the Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the Revised Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan be adopted by Council.
- 2. That Council to investigate opportunities for external resources and partnerships to undertake the recommendations of the Revised Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan.
- 3. That Council consult with Crown Lands to gain access rights for any future works within the creek area.



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REVIEW of

Stonequarry Creek & Vegetation Management Plan



October 2015

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Environment

Report of Environment to the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on Monday 20 June 2016

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1.0 Introduction

Proust Bushland Services (PBS) had been invited by Wollondilly Council to undertake a review of the Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan (1996; 2006) in regard to the current state (type, density, health etc) of the vegetation along the riparian zone from Racecourse Creek (GPS GDA84 27919/6215568) to the Viaduct (GPS GDA84 27919/6215568). The area was divided into 3 zones (see Maps 1-3):

Zone 1: Between Racecourse Creek and Elizabeth Street.

Zone 2: Between Elizabeth Street and Coull Street.

Zone 3: Between Coull Street and the viaduct.

2.0 Scope of Review

The review area was located in the riparian zone (average bank width of 20m) along a 2.4k section of Stonequarry Creek (approx 9ha). See Maps 1, 2 & 3. From the survey of the riparian zone from Racecourse Creek to the Viaduct, the following data was collected

- Native vegetation (canopy, understorey & ground layer); their densities, numbers, health & locations.
- All woody weeds, exotic climbers & noxious weeds; their densities, numbers, locations & recommended treatments.
- Potential revegetation areas & implementation strategy.
- Identify potential sites for interpretive signage.

3.0 Survey Data

The survey was undertaken in August/September 2015 with the on ground works from all access points. Both banks and the immediate riparian zones were comprehensively surveyed. The remnant vegetation in the review area was Open Forest with River Oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) as canopy in the immediate riparian zone and Eucalypts (i.e. Forest Red Gum [*E. tereticornis*]) and Black Wattles (*Acacia mearnsii*) further up the banks.

The understorey was scattered and few in numbers with the main native species recorded being Tree Violet (*Hymenthera dentata*) and Blackthorn (*Bursaria spinosa*). The ground layer was predominantly exotic herbs and grasses with occasional scattered native grass patches and clumps of Lomandras.

The review concentrated on keystone (priority) weeds such as woody weeds, exotic climbers and noxious weeds. There was >25 weed species recorded with 12 recorded as keystone weeds: 5 woody weeds species (1 canopy, 4 understorey), 6 exotic climbers (2 canopy, 4 understorey) and 1 ground layer species. Of these 12 weed species 6 are declared noxious in the Wollondilly LGA. See Weed Tables 1 & 2 for complete details.



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Zone 1: Between Racecourse Creek and Elizabeth Street (1k length, 4ha).

North/Eastern bank:

- The vegetation ranged from Open Forest with River Oak as canopy in the immediate riparian zone. The River Oaks were in good health and were a range of age classes but no natural recruitment was recorded. Eucalypts and Black Wattles were further up the banks. The Eucalypts were in reasonable health except for a band (30m length; see photo 1 & map 1) that were dead. Many of the Black Wattles are senescent.
- Occasional native understorey and previously planted Wattles (Acacia app.),
 Bottlebrushes (Callistemon spp.), Heath-Myrtles (Baeckea spp.) and Paperbarks (Melaleuca spp.) were recorded in this section.
- There were medium/dense patches of Moth Vine (Araujia sericifera) climbing over shrubs and up into canopy with English Ivy (Hedera helix) increasing as you move downstream to the private lands that had less native vegetation and more weed species. The ground layer was predominantly dense exotic groundcovers (i.e. Trad [Tradescantia fluminensis]) that were preventing natural regeneration but were also covering the bare soils minimising erosion.
- Interpretive sign identifying Zone 1 and intended outcomes of the original Stonequarry Creek Vegetation Management Plan project. The sign is now quite worn and the text is difficult to read.
- The current density of vegetation in this section does not seem high or to be detrimental to water flow. However a hydrologist (or suitably qualified person) should review this and present findings to council.

South/Western bank:

There was a discontinuous narrow band of River Oaks on this side of the creek. Also
there was less native species and dense sections (see photo 2) of woody weeds (i.e.
Privet [Ligustrum spp.]) throughout this side of the river with many more open areas
adjacent to the mown zone behind the houses.

Zone 2: Between Elizabeth Street and Coull Street (0.8k length, 3ha)

This zone is generally narrow than the other zones and lies either side of the main bridge in the centre of Picton.

Up stream from bridge:

- There was another discontinuous band of River Oaks. The River Oaks were in reasonable health and were of similar age classes but again no natural recruitment was recorded (see photo 3).
- Occasional native understorey and some previously plantings were recorded in this section. Low diversity of native species in all strata.
- There were medium patches of Moth Vine climbing over shrubs and up into canopy.
 The ground layer was predominantly dense exotic groundcovers that were preventing natural regeneration but were also covering the bare soils minimising erosion.
- 2 interpretive signs one near the Argyle St Bridge (worn, text difficult to read) and one near the Gazebo behind St Mark Church near the public car park (Sign in relatively good condition, the sign is bent but text still legible) identifying Zone 2 and the intended outcomes.



Environment

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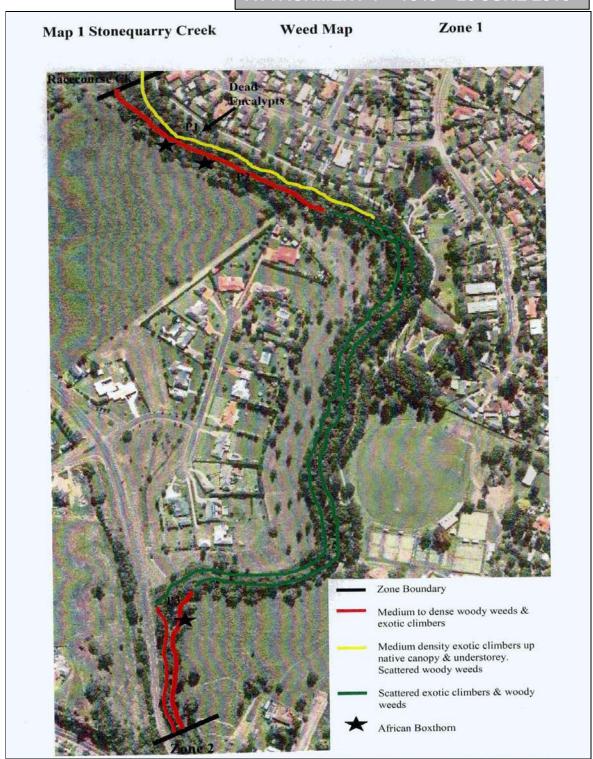
 The current density of vegetation in this section does not seem high or to be detrimental to water flow. Though some of the River Oaks on the western bank could be checked by a hydrologist (or suitably qualified person) and present findings to council.

Down stream from bridge:

- The section (approx 150m length; see photo 4) closest to the bridge had no canopy
 and sparse native and weed species in understorey layer. There was a mix of exotic
 grasses, Lomandras and exotic herbs in the ground layer.
- As you moved downstream there was occasional River Oaks but the greatest change
 was the dramatic increase in the woody weed cover ranging from seedlings, saplings
 to mature trees (see map 2).
- One large interpretive sign downstream of the bridge on the edge public car park. The sign is obscured by overgrowth of a couple of trees. The sign is also worn with portions of the text illegible. The sign provides an overall outline of the Stonequarry creek vegetation management project and its intended outcomes.

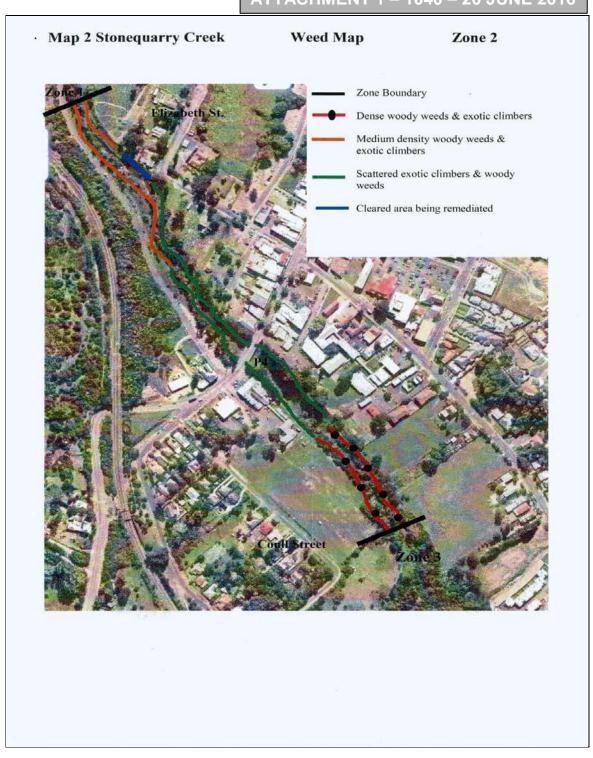


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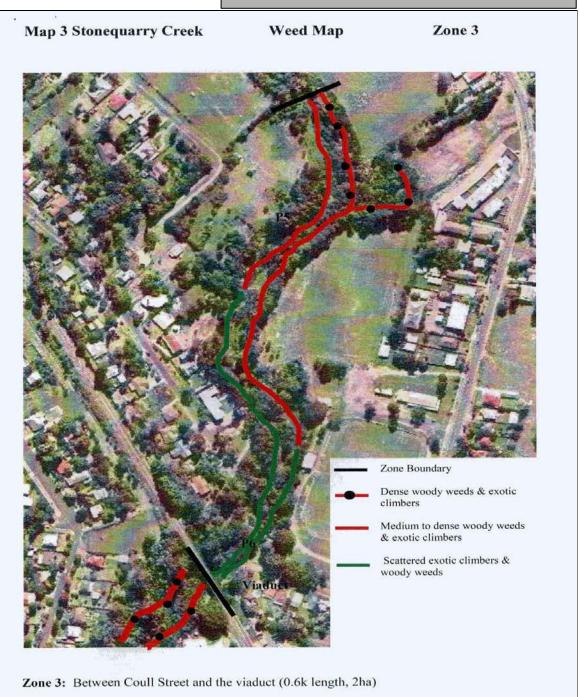
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The canopy starts to improve in this zone with more mature River oaks in good health and less canopy gaps. Also there was more diversity (from previous plantings) with increase numbers and variety of Eucalypts and Wattles. Photo 5 shows a good range of canopy to



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understorey native plantings which are approximately 10 years old. Previously it was a dense Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*) section that was restored by PBS and council.

The top section of this zone still had medium to dense woody weeds in understorey. The ground layer was predominantly weed but there were some areas (see Photo 6) were native species (i.e Lomandra) dominated.

There are 3 interpretive signs in this area, 2 identifying Zone 3 and the intended outcomes of the vegetation management plan. One of the signs is bent in half and therefore unreadable (at the end of Webster St). The other sign, on the Picton Ave. side, is in good condition. There is also a larger sign on this side of the creek highlighting the historical use of the area; this sign is in good condition.

The dense woody weeds & exotic climbers continue both upstream and downstream of the review area.

4.0 Recommendations

PBS recommends an integrated management approach that should be flexible and dynamic in nature. This involves being reactive to any changes in site conditions, monitor throughout the year and have all stakeholders aware of the different riparian management issues. From the site assessments and PBS's years of experience the following recommendations are:

- · Prioritise zones and keystone weed species;
- · a weed control and minimisation program implemented;
- · a revegetation program be implemented to complement the weed control works;
- · develop interpretive signage re both environmental and heritage values of the areas.

Priorities zones

All three zones have a mix of native vegetation in predominantly the canopy layer with some native species scattered in the understorey and ground layer. All three zones have a variety of weed (numbers & densities). The following priorities in zones and weeds are recommended:

- Start work in the 'better areas' (mid section: Zone 1[700m length], either side of main bridge: Zone 2 [200m length], lower section: Zone 3 [250m length]) and target all keystone weeds (see table 1).
- Target weed all exotic climbers in all other areas starting at the top of Zone 1 and
 work downstream. Key Threatening Processes (KTP's) are the processes that threaten
 the survival or evolutionary development of species, populations or ecological
 communities. They are listed in the <u>Threatened Species Conservation Act</u>, and include
 the Invasion of native communities by the establishment of exotic climbers.
- Starting at the top of Zone 1 undertake a systematic wood weed removal program.
 Rate (area) of work should not exceed the on-going ability to carry out secondary and maintenance weeding. This also will be reliant on the available funds and resources.



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Weed Control

Over 25 weed species were recorded throughout the survey site. The types and densities of weeds have been discussed as has the priorities of keystone weed species (See tables 1 & 2). There were 6 noxious weeds (see Table 1) and 2 Weeds of National Significance (WoNS).

To control the keystone weeds a variety of weed treatments should be implemented. All weed treatments should follow the guidelines set out by the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR).

A variety of treatments (see Table 1) should be implemented depending on the type of weed and its density, its location, slope and proximity to native plants and waterways. A variety of herbicides are recommended to be used depending on the type of weed and its density, effectiveness of herbicide, proximity to native plants and waterways and to minimise the chance of the weeds building up resistance. The appropriate disposal of the weed material is also important to prevent re-infestations from those materials. The main method of disposal recommended is the 'rafting' of these weed materials on site. This means placing any weeds that can re-shoot (e.g. Crofton Weed) off the ground on 'rafts' of dead material. These rafts will gradually break-down and also provide temporary replacement habitat for native fauna (esp. smaller birds).

So for high priority keystone species such as the climbers Madeira Vine hand removal and bagging all plant material is recommended. Some appropriate spraying can occur after thorough site preparation. While for weed such as Honeysuckle and English Ivy growing as a groundcover the hand dig treatment with rafting as the preferred control but larger plants growing up trees then the cut/paint treatment (using 100% glyphosate) is the recommended control.

Revegetation Program

Any natural areas project should try to maximise native recruitment and minimize weed establishment and spread. Having decided upon the appropriate weed control strategies we must now look into whether other appropriate bush regeneration strategies can be applied to help the regeneration process. The natural regeneration process after disturbances such as flood entails the recruitment of plants from seed in the soil and/or in the surrounding vegetation. The ability of an area to regenerate is also known as the sites resilience. It is considered that the overall resilience of this site is low.

So in conjunction with the weed control program a revegetation program should be implemented. The objectives of the revegetation program should be to increase species diversity in all strata, help minimise erosion, increase bank stability, increase the visual amenity and help minimise successional weed invasions. Areas that could be suitable for revegetation are highlighted in Map 4. Some of the aspects of the revegetation program should include:

- Adding more species to all strata levels;
- · Plant out canopy gaps;
- Underplantings of existing established native vegetation with suitable canopy and understorey species;

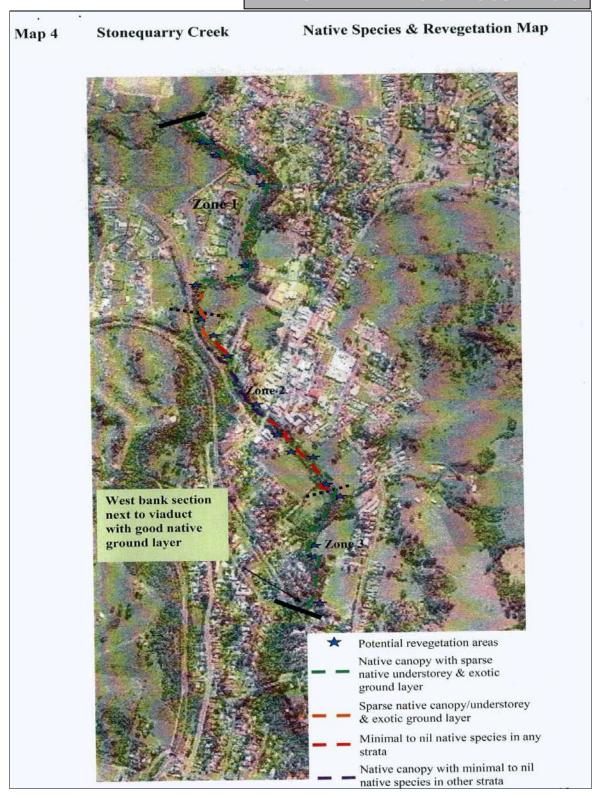


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- · Source seed/plants from local provenance;
- In high profile area (i.e. near main bridge and viaduct) plant more native understorey and ground layer species;
- At all times the species used should have minimal impacts on the water flow as stated in earlier reports;
- The revegetation works could also start in the 'better areas' (mid section: Zone 1[700m length], either side of main bridge: Zone 2 [200m length], lower section: Zone 3 [250m length]) after the areas has been weeded and site prepared.
- Involve as many stakeholders (schools, community groups, local businesses etc) in the revegetation program as possible.
- Develop implementation strategy utilising Council, Community and 3rd party investment.



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Common Name	Treatment(s) / Disposal	Zone(s) Density
Common Name	Treatment(s) / Disposar	Zone(s) Density
African N Boxthorn	Cut/paint and/or spray with Metsulfuron mix.	Zone 1.Scattered with dense patches
African Olive N	Cut/paint.	Zone 1, 2. Occasional.
Baby Smilax N	Biological control at work.	All. Scattered throughout
Blackberry N	Spray with Metsulfuron mix.	All. Scattered throughout
Blue Periwinkle	Spray with Metsulfuron mix. (in selected areas & revegetation zones)	All. Dense patches
Crofton weed	Manual removal 'raft' materials. Spray denser patches after site prep.	Zone 3. Occasional
English Ivy	Cut/paint stems going up trees & shrubs. Spray any dense ground patches with Metsulfuron mix	Zone 1. Scattered growing up trees & understorey in some areas
Giant Reed N	Cut/paint.	Zone 1, 2. Some patches
Inkweed	Hand dig, spot spray with glyphosate if not near native plants,	All. Scattered throughout
Japanese Honeysuckle	Cut/paint or spot spray depending on size of stem and proximity to native plants.	All. Scattered with medium patches
Madeira Vine N	Dense areas sprayed with Starane and surfactant.	Zone 1. Occasional patches
Moth Vine	Hand dig, bag fruit.	All. Scattered but denser in upper areas of Zone 1
Passionfruit	Hand pull; cut/paint.	All. occasional
Privet Cut/paint up to 8cm stems, stem inject larger ones. Spray seedlings Raft cut materials. All. so mature upper		All. scattered seedlings, saplings to mature trees with dense section in upper Zone 1, lower zone 2 & upper zone 3.
Trad	Spray with Starane mix. (in selected areas & revegetation zones)	All. Dense section throughout.
Turkey Rhubarb	Remove from native plants, site preparation then spray program.	All. Scattered with medium patches
White Morning Glory	Remove from native plants, site preparation then spray program.	Zone 3. Medium patches in lower areas
Annuals such as Hand dig amongst natives. Spot spray otherwise.		All. Scattered throughout.

Weeds in **bold** are keystone priority weeds to target N declared noxious weeds



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Table 2 Plant Species Table

Family		Common Name
Botanical Name		
Ferns		
Adiantaceae		
Adiantum aethiopicum		Common Maidenhair Fern
Aspleniaceae		
Asplenium flabellifolium		Necklace Fern
Blechnaceae		
Doodia aspera		Rasp Fern
Schizaeaceae		
Cheilanthes distans		Cloak Fern
Sinopteridaceae		
Pellaea falcata		Sickle Fern
Monocots		
Commelinaceae		
Commelina cyanea		
Tradescantia fluminensis	*	Trad
Cyperaceae		
Lepidosperma spp.		
Xanthorrhoeaceae		
Lomandra longifolia		
Lomandra multiflora		
Philesiaceae		
Geitonoplesium cymosum		Scrambling Lily
Phormiaceae		
Dianella sp.		Flax Lily
Poaceae	200	
Arundo donax	*	Giant Reed
Imperata cylindrica		
Oplismenus spp.		Basket Grass
Themeda australis		Kangaroo grass
Dicots		
Acanthaceae		2.0
Pseuderanthemum varibile		Pastel Flower
Asclepiadaceae		
Araujia sericifera	*	Moth Vine
Tylophora barbata		
Asparagaceae		
Asparagus asparagoides WoNS *		Baby Smilax
Araliaceae		
Hedera helix	*	English Ivy
Asteraceae		4
Ageratina adenophora *		Crofton weed
Bidens pilosa	*	Cobblers Peg
Senecio spp.		



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Siegesbeckia orientalis		Indian Weed
amily		Common Name
totanical Name		
asellaceae		
nredera cordifolia		Madeira Vine
Bignoniaceae		
Pandorea pandorana		Wonga Vine
Caprifoliaceae		Japanese
Lonicera japonica	*	Honeysuckle
Caryophyllaceae		
Stellaria flaccida		Forest Starwort
Casuarinaceae		parties - was as
Casuarina cunninghamiana		River Oak
Cassythaceae		1000 Value 1000 V
Cassytha pubescens		Devil's Twine
Convolvulaceae	17911	
pomoea alba	η¢	White Morning glory
Crassulaceae		
Crassula multicava	*	Shade Crassula
Euphorbiaceae		
Breynia oblongifolia		
Phyllanthus sp.		
abaceae: Faboideae		
Glycine sp.		
Hardenbergia violacea		False Sarsparilla
abaceae: Mimosoideae		
Icacia elata		G 11 1171
1cacia floribunda		Sally Wattle
lcacia mearnsii		Black Wattle
amiaceae		
Plectranthus parviflorus		
Meliaceae		White Caller
Melia azedarach		White Cedar
Myrsinaceae		Muttanussad
Rapanea variabilis		Muttonwood
Myrtaceae		Dlug Doy
Eucalyptus baueriana		Blue Box
Eucalyptus tereticornis		Red Forest gum
Eucalyptus spp.		
Dleaceae	*	Deliver
Ligustrum spp.	ra*	Privet
Notelaea longifolia	* T +	Native Olive
Olea europaea subsp. cuspidata	N *	African Olive
Passifloraceae	*	D 1 C 1
Passiflora edulis	*	Passionfruit
hytolaccaceae	*	
Phytolacea octandra	*	Inkweed
Pittosporaceae		DILak
Bursaria spinosa		Blackthorn



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Pittosporum undulatum	Pitto	
Family	Common Name	
Botanical Name		
Polygonaceae		
Acetosa sagittata *	Turkey Rhubarb	
Ranunculaceae		
Clematis aristata	Old Man's Beard	
Rhamnaceae		
Pomaderris sp.	1	
Rosaceae		
Rubus fruticosus aggreg. N	* Blackberry	
R. parvifolius	Native Raspberry	
Sapindaceae		
Dodonaea truncatiales	Hop Bush	
Solanaceae		
Lycium ferocissimum N	* African Boxthorn	
Solanum prinophylum	Forest Nightshade	
Ulmacea		
Trema tomentosa	Native Peach	
Verbenaceae		
Clerodendrum tomentosum		
Vitaceae		
Cayratia clematidea	Native Grape	

^{*}denotes weed species



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